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RHMF/ISS/CJT/ HOA //POLAD// IMMEDIATE
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RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 1933
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SUBJECT: TENSIONS ESCALATING IN MOGADISHU

CLASSIFIED BY AMBASSADOR WILLIAM M. BELLAMY, REASONS 1.4
(B,C,D)

¶1. (S) Somali Prime Minister Gedi telephoned Ambassador late April 19 to convey great concern over apparent preparations for renewed fighting in Mogadishu. There are reports, he said, of roadblocks going up and movements of men and weapons. Civilians are fleeing. (NOTE: We are receiving confirmation of these developments from other channels. END NOTE).

¶2. (S) Gedi had just emerged from what he described as a stormy five-hour cabinet meeting in Baidoa in which numerous participants wanted to blame and publicly condemn the U.S. for renewed tension in Mogadishu. Gedi said he pushed back against this pressure, but only with great difficulty. The cabinet finally decided to issue a public appeal to the parties in Mogadishu to exercise restraint and to draft a letter to the UN and other international bodies requesting assistance in bringing peace to the capital. The letter might also request that the UN send an "assessment team" to Mogadishu to investigate the reasons for continuing tension and conflict.

¶3. (S) I told Gedi that we had only limited influence with some of the parties in Mogadishu, but that we would use it to counsel maximum restraint. He was extremely grateful for this. I asked that he convey to his cabinet colleagues the clear message that the United States was opposed any outbreak of renewed fighting in Mogadishu. He agreed to do so.

¶4. (S) I told Gedi that we were concerned that a new round of fighting might be sparked by the Islamic extremists, in which case the alliance leaders in Mogadishu with whom the USG maintains relationships would have no choice but to fight back. Gedi said that, if that happened, cabinet would blame the Islamic extremists.

¶5. (S) COMMENT: The danger appears real. We do not know at this point which side might seek to precipitate another round of fighting. Our influence with the alliance in this matter is limited, but we will attempt to contact them to urge that they not initiate combat. (NOTE: We conveyed the same message two weeks ago. END NOTE). To ensure that the USG is clearly on the record as being opposed to any

outbreak of renewed violence in Mogadishu, Embassy issued the following public statement immediately following our contact with Prime Minister Gedi. The Department may wish to issue a similar appeal. END COMMENT.

Begin statement:

In response to reports of increasing tension in Mogadishu, the United States calls upon all Somalis to work together to encourage restraint and calm in the city. Provocations and fresh outbreaks of violence in Mogadishu can serve only the interests of extremist elements. The United States urges all parties to seek reconciliation through dialogue and cooperation with the Transitional Federal Institutions.

End statement.

Bellamy